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Promotion and protection of the rights of children: promotion and protection of the rights of children

Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In its resolution 71/177, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its seventy-second session a report on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the issues addressed in the resolution, with a focus on violence against children. The present report highlights significant achievements by Member States, United Nations system entities (including the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Health Organization), regional bodies, multi-stakeholder coalitions and others in advancing the protection of children from all forms of violence and includes recommendations for continued progress on this critical issue.

* A/72/150.

** The present report was submitted after the deadline in order to reflect the most recent developments.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 71/177, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its seventy-second session a report on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the issues addressed in the resolution, with a focus on violence against children. The present report is submitted in accordance with that request.

II. Status of and reporting on the Convention

2. As at 1 July 2017, the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been ratified or acceded to by 196 States. One Member State, the United States of America, is not yet party to the Convention. As at 1 July 2017, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict had been ratified or acceded to by 166 States; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had been ratified or acceded to by 173 States; and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure had been ratified or acceded to by 34 States.

3. Since the previous report (A/71/413), the Committee on the Rights of the Child held its seventy-third to seventy-fifth sessions. As at 1 July 2017, the Committee had received initial reports from all but three States parties: South Sudan, Tonga and the State of Palestine. The Committee had reviewed all initial reports submitted. The Committee had received 516 initial and periodic reports, including combined periodic reports. The Committee had received 113 initial reports and two periodic reports under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and 102 initial reports and 2 periodic reports under the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

III. Accelerating progress in the prevention and elimination of violence against children

4. Ending violence against children means creating a world where societies no longer tolerate nor commit violence against children and children's rights are fully protected and realized. States, United Nations system entities, regional organizations, civil society, private sector actors and others have been making strides towards this goal through systematic work and a broad set of dynamic and innovative prevention and response initiatives. The 2006 study on violence against children (A/61/299) and its recommendations have helped to hasten progress. Today, national, regional and global actors are accelerating action and building on the strategic opportunity presented by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially target 16.2, which calls for an end to all forms of violence against children, as well as target 5.2 on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, target 5.3 on eliminating such harmful practices as child marriage and female genital mutilation and target 8.7 on eradicating forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour.

5. Violence affects children of all ages the world over. Each year, at least 1 billion children between the ages of 2 and 17 (half of the world's children in this age group) experience emotional, physical or sexual violence.[1] Violence does not

[1] See A/71/206, para. 9. See also: Susan Hillis and others, "Global prevalence of past-year violence against children: a systematic review and minimum estimates", *Pediatrics*, vol. 137, No. 3 (March 2016).

discriminate by age, race, culture, socioeconomic status or geography. It occurs in all settings, including in homes, communities, schools, online environments, workplaces, detention centres and childcare institutions. Children suffer physical, verbal, psychological and emotional violence, including neglect, exploitation, sexual abuse, trafficking, torture, homicide, forced and child marriage, female genital mutilation, bullying, child labour and other forms of violence. The global costs of violence against children are staggering, estimated to be as high as $7 trillion, a cost that far outstrips the projected investment needed to prevent such violence.[2]

6. Violence against children is often associated with poverty, marginalization, discrimination, gender stereotypes and other vulnerabilities. Children with disabilities face disproportionate risks of experiencing violence. Evidence shows that violence in childhood may have long-lasting, sometimes fatal, effects. Childhood violence increases the risk of injury, self-harm, mental health and psychosocial conditions. Violence can compromise cognitive development and school performance. Childhood violence can precipitate early pregnancy and motherhood, cause reproductive health problems and lead to communicable and non-communicable diseases.[3]

7. A child's right to freedom from all forms of violence is a human rights imperative firmly grounded in international law. Increased international attention and determination to end violence against children has accelerated the development of international standards and policy frameworks. Among those are the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, the United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (see General Assembly resolution 69/194), the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the International Labour Organization Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No. 182) and the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

8. Since the publication of the 2006 study on violence against children, the United Nations established the global advocacy mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children to promote the implementation of the study's recommendations and the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children, working closely and cooperating with the United Nations system. The Committee systematically issues recommendations on methods to prevent and end violence against children. Its guidelines for periodic reports include a specific cluster on violence against children (see CRC/C/58/Rev3). The Committee has also issued two general comments on the question of corporal punishment (see CRC/C/GC/8) and the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence(see CRC/C/GC/13). The Human Rights Council has addressed children's protection from violence during its annual meetings on the rights of the child.[4]

9. Target 16.2 of the 2030 Agenda acts as a catalyst for accelerating progress and gives urgency to global efforts to end violence against children and to achieve related goals addressing poverty, health, education, gender equality, safe environments and justice. The global agenda to end violence against children has

[2] Paola Pereznieto and others, "The Costs and Economic Impact of Violence Against Children", Overseas Development Institute/Child Fund Alliance, September 2014.

[3] See A/HRC/34/45, para. 53; and Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, "Toward a World Free from Violence: Global Survey on Violence against Children" (New York, 2013).

[4] For example, Human Rights Council resolutions 34/16 and 31/7.

expanded to national and regional levels. There is growing ownership of the agenda by Member States, driving progress from the national level, a key condition for achieving target 16.2 and other violence-related targets.

IV. Milestones in preventing and eliminating violence against children

A. International multi-stakeholder cooperative processes

10. Several global multi-stakeholder platforms and initiatives aim to provide technical support to national actors and build global knowledge. The Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children, chaired by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, is a platform for policy coordination and information-sharing among United Nations system entities to advance the implementation of the recommendations from the 2006 study on violence against children. The Global Partnership to End Violence against Children and Alliance 8.7, which aims to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour, are specific platforms supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Those platforms convene cross-sectoral institutional and individual partners, including Governments, the United Nations, civil society, the private sector, foundations, researchers, academics and children to build political will, promote solutions, accelerate action and strengthen collaboration.[5]

11. The Violence Prevention Alliance is a global network of Member States, international organizations and civil society organizations supporting the implementation of recommendations from the *World Report on Violence and Health*, published by the World Health Organization (WHO). Similarly, the WePROTECT Global Alliance to End Child Sexual Exploitation Online is a partnership of 70 countries, leading technology companies, international organizations and civil society committed to ending child sexual abuse and exploitation through a coordinated response at the national and international levels.[6]

12. Other multi-stakeholder initiatives include UNiTE to End Violence against Women, coordinated by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), and the High Time to End Violence against Children initiative, a social mobilization initiative promoted by the Special Representative with a wide range of partners to advance protection of children from violence.[7] Issue-specific initiatives include the Coalition on Every Child's Right to a Nationality, the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, the Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Promoting Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, the Global Working Group to End School-related Gender-based Violence, the Early Childhood Peace Consortium and the Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities.

[5] See www.end-violence.org and www.alliance87.org.

[6] See www.weprotect.org.

[7] See www.endviolenceagainstchildren.org.

B. Regional plans and commitments

13. Regional organizations are driving initiatives, policies and legislation to address violence against children.[8] The African Union has established goals to end violence against children by 2040 and several States are establishing the African Partnership to End Violence against Children, using advocacy and cross-border learning to strengthen political action. The African Common Position on the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage, the model law to end child marriage in Southern Africa, and the 2015 African Girls' Summit on Ending Child Marriage support the elimination of child marriage in Africa.[9] The Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Plan of Action on Elimination of Violence against Children is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The South Asian Initiative to End Violence against Children is formulating its second five-year work plan and spearheaded the Regional Action Plan to End Child Marriage in South Asia (2015-2018) and the Kathmandu Call for Action to End Child Marriage in South Asia.[10]

14. The European Union's Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2015-2019) includes support for strengthening national child protection systems to prevent and address violence against children. The Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021) includes protection of children from violence, through the promotion of child participation and the prevention of the deprivation of liberty and other violence-related concerns.[11] In Latin America, the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) Niñ@Sur initiative is developing a regional policy on positive discipline, violence prevention and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Caribbean Community Task Force on Child Rights and Child Protection has a regional strategy on prevention and elimination of violence against children. The Central American Integration System is drafting a regional convention to address sexual violence against children.[12] The League of Arab States has launched two follow-up reports regarding implementation of recommendations of the 2006 study on violence against children.[13]

15. Additional advances at the regional level include improved data collection and information exchange in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States regarding children on the move, the development of regional networks and the sharing of applied research plans and practice on violence prevention.[14] To accelerate progress in violence prevention and response, the Special Representative has hosted seven annual cross-regional meetings of regional organizations and eight high-level regional consultations.[15]

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[8] See A/71/206, para. 57.

[9] Ibid., para. 72.

[10] Ibid., para. 80 and A/HRC/31/20, paras 37-40.

[11] See A/HRC/31/20, paras. 41-42.

[12] Ibid., paras. 29-32.

[13] See http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/sites/default/files/publications_final/league_of_arab_states_report_2013.pdf; and http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/sites/default/files/publications_final/las_report_final.pdf.

[14] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "Annual results report 2016: child protection" (New York, 2017).

[15] See http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/knowledge.

C. National level advancements

16. Member States are steadily reforming laws to protect children from violence. Over 50 States have enacted national legislation banning all forms of violence against children, most recently in Ireland, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lithuania, Mongolia, Paraguay, Peru, Slovenia and Viet Nam.[16]

17. More than 90 countries are adopting and implementing comprehensive multisectoral national agendas to free children from violence, most recently in the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ghana, Indonesia, Nigeria and Norway.[17] Multisectoral agendas are crucial for promoting coordinated action across Governments, fostering synergy between institutions and generating resources for implementation. The WHO Global Plan of Action (2016) aims to strengthen the role of the health system within national multisectoral responses to interpersonal violence, in particular against women and children.[18] Many civil society organizations have raised awareness and engaged in national initiatives against corporal punishment, female genital mutilation and other violence-related issues.

18. The most recent data from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) show that half of all school-age children live in countries that do not fully prohibit corporal punishment in schools, leaving 732 million children without full legal protection. However, several States have recently adopted legislation prohibiting corporal punishment, including in homes, care settings, schools, penal institutions and as punishment for criminal activity. Others have passed partial prohibitions. Some States engage in programmes for positive child development and discipline, parenting skills and the prevention of violence.[19]

19. Twenty-one of the 29 States where female genital mutilation is prevalent have enacted national decrees or legislation banning the practice.[20] The number of States with budget lines addressing female genital mutilation rose from 6 to 13 in 2015.[21] The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting supports the establishment and enforcement of legal and policy frameworks for promoting the abandonment of the practice. The Joint Programme supports prevention and protection services, including child protection and sexual and reproductive health services; and efforts to change social norms. In 2016, more than 2,931 communities across 16 countries declared their abandonment of female genital mutilation, comprising about 8.5 million people.[22] Even in States without full-fledged laws on female genital mutilation, advances towards criminalization of the practice are apparent, such as in Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria and the Sudan. A new draft law on gender-based violence in Mali includes the prohibition of female genital mutilation and child marriage.[23]

20. The Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, developed by UNFPA and UNICEF, supports 12 high-prevalence countries[24] to develop and implement national action plans and strategies to combat child marriage, strengthen education and health systems and provide reproductive health services for girls at

[16] See A/HRC/34/45, para. 16.
[17] See A/HRC/31/20, para. 99.
[18] See www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/gpa-booklet/en/.
[19] See A/68/257, para. 31.
[20] UNICEF, *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: a statistical overview and exploration of the dynamics of change* (New York, 2013).
[21] UNICEF, "Annual results report 2016".
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nepal, the Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Yemen and Zambia.

risk of marriage, already married or in unions, support community mobilization to end child marriage and generate data and evidence to support decision-making and informed programming. By 2016, 7[25] of the 12 States had developed national strategies to end child marriage.

21. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) works with several States to promote legal and policy reform aimed at the prevention of children's involvement in violence and crime, and to strengthen the capacity of justice systems to effectively prevent and respond to violence against children.[26] Those initiatives foster coordination between justice and child protection systems, to better serve and protect children in contact with the justice system (child victims, witnesses and alleged child offenders). Advances in effective monitoring and inspection of places of detention are evident in several countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. Monitoring and inspection efforts include the establishment of autonomous institutions to prevent and identify incidents, inter-institutional commissions of supervision within Ministries of Justice, and bodies under the auspices of independent human rights institutions (see A/71/206, paras. 106-111).

22. Confidential, child-friendly counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms are an integral part of strengthening national legal and policy frameworks to prevent and respond to violence against children. While counselling, recovery and reintegration facilities remain scarce, encouraging initiatives exist. In Mali, a national manual for the care of child victims of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect connects mechanisms from across the Government; Israel maintains centres providing services for sexually abused children. In addition, one-stop care centres providing medical, mental health and psychosocial support, forensic and other services in one location are increasingly common, such as the Thuthuzela Care Centres in South Africa, child protection units in the Philippines and children's houses in several European countries.[27]

23. Several States are improving child protection budget and finance decisions, including on violence against children. According to UNICEF, the number of States improving child protection budgeting rose from 27 in 2015 to 31 in 2016.[28] Myanmar, Uganda and others, with UNICEF support, are expanding child protection budgets by developing a financial management package for child protection systems to standardize and analyse government expenditures and inform advocacy and guidance. In Uganda, firmer integration of equitable budgeting at the local level continues to provide a platform for improving future budgets.[29]

24. States are increasing capacity for early detection and prevention of violence against children, as well as the response thereto, through the training of personnel in social work, law enforcement, education, health, criminal justice and matters relating to migration, refugees and asylum seeking. Such training includes the use of appropriate procedures and protocols in response to signs of violence against and abuse of children. Some States have established institutions, introduced codes of conduct, or issued memorandums of understanding to promote continuous capacity-building. Morocco has basic training modules for responding to violence against children in the curricula of faculties of medicine, arts and social sciences, and

[25] Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, Nepal, Uganda and Zambia.

[26] The mandate and role of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to provide assistance in the area of justice for children has been reaffirmed by resolutions of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council.

[27] Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, "Toward a World Free from Violence".

[28] UNICEF, "Annual results report 2016".

[29] Ibid.

within training institutes for health workers.[30] Togo trains teachers in positive discipline so they can model positive, non-violent interactions.[31]

25. Many States are working to strengthen institutional capacity to protect children. Nineteen States have adopted protocols for training professionals across sectors and handling cases of sexual violence against children. The Dominican Republic, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Maldives, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam, among others, are mobilizing the travel and tourism sector for the prevention of sexual exploitation of children through the signing of codes of conduct.[32]

V. Programmatic advances in preventing and eliminating violence against children

A. Improved data collection for evidence-based programming

26. Data collection is critical for developing important, evidence-based programmes, informing budget allocations and policy decisions and enabling public scrutiny of the State's response to violence against children. Efforts to consolidate data systems seek to improve coherence and infrastructures for global monitoring, including tools for quality assurance and target setting. Such efforts also address persisting challenges, including inconsistencies among national, subnational and international definitions, inaccurate recording of data, limited data disaggregation, weak country-level capacity and under-reporting.

27. The Statistical Commission's Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators has adopted three important indicators related to target 16.2 on children's exposure to sexual, physical and emctional violence. Target 5.2 indicators track intimate partner violence and non-partner violence against women and girls and target 5.3 has indicators for tracking child marriage and female genital mutilation.

28. National Governments collect data on violence against children using Demographic and Health Surveys, multiple indicator cluster surveys and other household surveys. The cluster surveys include a module on the use of violent and non-violent disciplinary practices by household members and the Demographic and Health Surveys include a module on domestic violence. Several States have strengthened national child protection systems and violence prevention programmes using data from specific surveys that measure violence against children, implemented with technical assistance from the Together for Girls partnership. Those national surveys help States document the magnitude, nature and impact of violence in childhood and identify health outcomes, risks and protective factors. The data provide important points of reference for policy and budgeting decisions. Thirteen[33] national Governments have completed specific surveys on violence against children, with around 10 additional surveys under way.

Together for Girls partnership

29. Together for Girls is a global private-public partnership, aiming to end violence against children, especially sexual violence against girls. The partnership

[30] Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, "Toward a World Free from Violence".

[31] Ibid.

[32] UNICEF, "Annual results report 2016".

[33] Botswana, Cambodia, Haiti, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Swaziland, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

supports Governments and communities to gather and present comprehensive data to develop and implement country-level policy and action plans to eliminate violence against children and its associated impact. The partnership engages in global advocacy and public awareness-raising on issues related to violence against children. It is active in 22 countries and includes the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNFPA, UNICEF, UN-Women, and the World Health Organization/Pan-American Health Organization, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the Governments of Canada and the United States of America and several private sector actors.

30. Several States are developing comprehensive data systems and improving data collection on specific aspects of violence against children. In Mexico, Infoniñez includes 279 indicators disaggregated by gender, age, municipality, health, nutrition, education and protection, among others.[34] Civil society organizations have established Equal Measures 2030 to compile data and provide evidence on gender gaps in outcomes, monitor progress for girls and identify evidence-based solutions.[35]

31. The United Nations Survey of Crime Trends, Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, supported by 130 national focal points, provides data on crime on an annual basis. The Survey is undergoing a review to respond to new information needs derived from the Sustainable Development Goals indicators framework, including better situation analyses on children in contact with the justice system, and to adopt the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes — a tool for improving statistical information on crime and criminal justice, including on children in contact with the justice system.[36]

B. Advances in enhancing awareness, consolidating knowledge and sharing good practices

32. Efforts to enhance awareness and knowledge are essential for changing the social norms, attitudes and behaviours of parents, families and communities. Many countries are actively working to raise awareness through the media, in schools and with parents and teachers. This includes national campaigns, the use of new media, child-to-child radio programmes and manuals addressing specific aspects of violence against children.[37]

33. Research initiatives by the Special Representative have contributed to efforts to consolidate knowledge to address violence against children. Key publications include "Toward a World Free from Violence: Global Survey on Violence against Children", and thematic studies on violence in schools and in the justice system, restorative justice, girls in the criminal justice system, bullying, child-friendly reporting and complaint mechanisms (to safeguard child participation), harmful practices, armed violence and organized crime, and information and communications technologies.[38] Companion child-friendly materials help inform and empower children. Expert consultations convened by the Special Representative

[34] Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, "Toward a World Free from Violence".

[35] See www.equalmeasures2030.org.

[36] For International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes, see www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/statistics/iccs.html.

[37] Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, "Toward a World Free from Violence".

[38] See http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/publications.

on critical areas of concern contribute to awareness-raising, policy development, the consolidation of knowledge and the sharing of best practices.[39]

34. The report "Hidden in Plain Sight: a statistical analysis of violence against children" (2014), published by UNICEF, is a comprehensive compilation of key data related to violence against children. UNICEF also published a rigorous review of global research evidence on policy and practice on school-related gender-based violence[40] under the End Gender Violence in Schools Initiative. UNICEF and partners published the "Multi-Country Study on the Drivers of Violence Affecting Children" (2016) (an ongoing action-research project in Italy, Peru, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe), and "Uprooted: the growing crisis for refugee and migrant children". UNICEF and partners also developed Global Kids Online, an international network and research project on children's use of the Internet. Know Violence in Childhood is a collaborative global learning initiative, which has commissioned over 30 research papers and a global road map on violence prevention, to be finalized in 2017. The evidence-based WHO global status report on violence prevention (2014), evaluates the extent to which countries have implemented prevention strategies and reduced interpersonal violence.

35. A 2016 global study by End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism, on the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism, revealed that this crime has expanded across the globe and has outpaced all response efforts.[41] The "Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse" (2016) serves as a guide to navigate the complex lexicon related to sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children and aims to build consensus on key concepts across agencies, sectors and countries.[42]

36. Several new handbooks and guidelines were recently produced or are under development. In Jordan, UNICEF supported the development of guidelines for addressing gender-based violence among people with disabilities, including children, and provided training to relevant agencies. The World Health Organization led the development of a new inter-agency tool, known as INSPIRE, helping countries and communities to intensify the efforts to prevent violence against children.[43]

Seven strategies for ending violence against children

37. In 2016, 10 core agencies developed and launched a technical package of evidence-based strategies to strengthen programmes and services for preventing and responding to violence against children, INSPIRE, and established the INSPIRE working group for Governments, civil society, professional associations, Government and private sector donors and United Nations system entities to collaborate, share information and review joint progress and opportunities.

38. The strategies presented by INSPIRE include: guidelines for the implementation of laws and policies; strengthening and investing in improved case management to better identify vulnerable children and refer them to specialized services; establishing child-sensitive and gender-responsive counselling, reporting and complaint mechanisms and independent monitoring to address incidents of violence; systematic considerations of gender, age, family situation, disability and other key factors; strengthening the social service workforce, including the quality

[39] See http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/children-corner.
[40] Available from http://www.ungei.org/SRGBV_review_FINAL_V1_web_version_2.pdf.
[41] See http://globalstudysectt.org.
[42] Available from www.unicef.org/protection/files/Terminology_guidelines_396922-E.pdf.
[43] Available from www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/inspire/en/.

and number of social workers; and promoting prevention through early intervention services, positive, non-violent parenting and positive discipline practices.

39. Cross-national partnerships promote good practices and collaboration and create accountability structures. Under the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, 13 countries have signed on as "pathfinding partners" and are working together to develop national road maps to end violence against children. Several countries have appointed senior government focal points for the in-country pathfinding process.[44]

40. The United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice offer a comprehensive and practical framework to assist Governments in the review of national laws, procedures and practices; encourage States to adopt effective ways to reduce the number of children in the justice system, such as diversion measures, restorative justice programmes, support to families, non-coercive treatment, education programmes and alternatives to judicial proceedings; support criminal justice systems to prevent, and respond to, violence against children; and strengthen multisectoral coordination.

41. A key vehicle to support States in implementing the Model Strategies is the UNODC Global Programme on Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice,[45] which serves as a platform to share, exchange and replicate lessons learned and good practices. Colombia is the first pilot country under the Global Programme to create a paradigm shift in the treatment of children in contact with the justice system. The approach includes the promotion of a restorative justice approach and wide use of diversionary measures, capacity-building for justice and child protection professionals, a crime prevention strategy through arts, sports and cultural activities; and the establishment of coordination mechanisms.[46]

VI. Innovative practices

42. National Governments, regional organizations, United Nations entities, civil society organizations and other actors have increased the efforts to involve children in initiatives to prevent and respond to violence against children, including through reporting, research and consultations. States have introduced policies and legal provisions to support children's participation. For example, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs of Ireland has issued guidelines for developing ethical research projects involving children.[47]

43. Children's participation in research on violence against children, both as subjects and as researchers, includes participatory and child-led methodologies. In Kenya, young people are engaged in cutting-edge participatory digital mapping of risks and vulnerabilities related to health and protection in their community through the "Map Kibera" project, supported by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), UNICEF and other partners.[48] UNICEF and partners support child participatory research initiatives such as U-Report, EduTrac (for education monitoring) and digital community mapping, which are producing results in many States.

[44] See www.end-violence.org/pathfinding.html.

[45] See General Assembly resolution 69/172, paragraph 20.

[46] See E/CN.15/2017/9, paras. 42 and 45; and E/CN.7/2017/2-E/CN.15/2017/2, para. 67.

[47] Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, "Toward a World Free from Violence".

[48] See http://mapkibera.org/.

44. A ground-breaking, text-message based platform, known as U-Report, serves to engage young people in their communities, including on violence against children. U-Report has over 1 million active users in 15 States. U-Reporters send text messages to express their opinions and make recommendations for issues affecting their lives. It yields real-time information that can be used for advocacy and shared directly with elected leaders. Every member of the Ugandan Parliament has signed up for U-Report to monitor and respond to the opinions of young people in their districts.[49]

45. Technological innovations, such as RapidSMS[50] and RapidPro[51] monitor child protection issues, including efforts to end violence against children. Primero is an inter-agency initiative including UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, UNFPA, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. Primero is an open source software application that helps partners securely and confidentially collect, store, manage and share data for protection-related incident monitoring, case management, family tracing and reunification.[52]

VII. Areas of focused attention

A. Gender dimensions

46. Generally, many forms of violence and harmful practices against children, and girls in particular, are rooted in gender inequality and stereotypes, especially sexual violence and harassment, intimate partner and family violence, school-related gender-based violence and child marriage. The scale and scope of gender-based violence against girls around the globe is massive, with one third of women experiencing physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime and an estimated 120 million girls under 20 having experienced sexual violence.[53] Gender-based violence is linked to adolescent pregnancy, poor school attendance and high dropout rates, in addition to other physical and mental health consequences. Girls in humanitarian crises, conflict, natural disasters and displaced or migrant girls are more vulnerable to gender-based violence. The global community is increasing attention to boys' exposure to sexual violence, though data on prevalence are less available.

47. Responses to the gender dimensions of violence against children range from strengthening legislation and developing standards, policies and guidelines, to advocacy and building capacity for prevention and response services. In 2016, at least 16 States adopted national policies and plans to address sexual violence against children.[54] Other legislation and policy reform focus on promoting gender equality, addressing aspects of gender-based violence, prohibiting child marriage and tackling domestic violence.

48. School-related gender-based violence, defined as acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, affects millions of children, teachers and communities around the world, and is perpetuated because

[49] See www.unicef.org/media/media_82583.html.
[50] See www.rapidsms.org.
[51] See www.rapidpro.io.
[52] See www.primero.org.
[53] See https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/violence/sexual-violence.
[54] UNICEF, "Annual results report 2016".

of gender norms and unequal power dynamics.[55] Girls are particularly vulnerable, although both male and female students and teachers can be victims. National Governments, with the support of United Nations system entities, civil society and others, are exploring prevention and response approaches, including legal and policy reform, education, training for educators, codes of conduct and the promotion of positive behaviours. Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Togo and Zambia are enacting comprehensive school-related gender-based violence prevention plans as part of the End Gender Violence in Schools initiative supported by the Global Partnership for Education and UNICEF.[56]

49. Attention to the rights of girls in the criminal justice system is increasing. The thematic publication of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, *Safeguarding the rights of girls in the criminal justice system: Preventing violence, stigmatization and deprivation of liberty* (2015),[57] explains that millions of girls around the world are exposed to violence in many forms, yet most cases go unnoticed or unaddressed by the criminal justice system. Girls who come into contact with the justice system risk stigmatization, punishment and re-victimization. Several States are working to strengthen relevant legislation, prevention programmes and capacity to tackle impunity.

B. Child labour, including its worst forms

50. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that, in 2012, some 168 million children aged between 5 and 17 were involved in child labour, a decline of 30 per cent since 2000,[58] with a clear downward trajectory. Child labour, especially its worst forms, often involves violence, such as forced labour, the use of children by armed forces and armed groups, sexual exploitation, illicit activities and hazardous work. Millions of children face compounding risks that pave the way for exploitation, including deep poverty, discrimination, humanitarian crises, organized crime and poor enforcement or regulation of child protection and labour standards. Forced displacement and situations in which migration is the only viable option for children can increase their vulnerability to child labour. Increased global attention is evident in the establishment of Alliance 8.7 to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour.

C. Children on the move

51. Today, the world is facing unprecedented levels of displacement and irregular migration, which require an effective and rights-sensitive global response. According to UNHCR, half of the world's refugees are children.[59] International human rights law establishes and protects the rights of all children, including

[55] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, *Global Guidance on Addressing School-related Gender-based Violence* (New York and Paris, 2016).

[56] UNICEF, "End gender violence in schools, A rigorous review of evidence of global research evidence on policy and practice on school-related gender-based violence". Available from http://www.ungei.org/SRGBV_review_FINAL_V1_web_version_2.pdf.

[57] Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, *Safeguarding the rights of girls in the criminal justice system: preventing violence, stigmatization and deprivation of liberty* (New York, 2015).

[58] International Labour Organization, *Marking progress against child labour — Global estimates and trends 2000-2012*, International Labour Office, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2013).

[59] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Global trends: forced displacement in 2016" (Geneva, 2017).

migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons, regardless of their migratory status or that of their parents. International and regional refugee law affords further protections to refugee children.

52. Yet, many children on the move suffer severe hardship, violence and insecurity. Recent data indicate that 50 million children are on the move and 1 in 200 children is a refugee, an increase of 75 per cent over five years.[60] Children undertake risky journeys, often alone or separated from their parents or families, to escape persecution or conflict, poverty, discrimination or other violations of their rights. They are at risk of abuse, neglect, violence, exploitation, trafficking, forced recruitment into armed groups, forced marriage or separation from their families. Children may be too frightened to report incidents of abuse or violence and may experience fear, anxiety, panic, depression, sleep disorders, mental health and other psychosocial problems. Authorities may place the children in crowded detention centres or other restricted areas against their best interests. Children, and in particular girls, may be detained or subject to forced labour or marriage under the false pretence that it is done in the interest of protecting them.[61]

53. Ensuring protection for children on the move, addressing the root causes of conflict and irregular migration, and promoting legal pathways for admission to third countries is imperative. Several States have strengthened legislation to protect children while on the move and during reintegration to their country of origin.[62] The Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on Migrant Workers are developing a joint general comment on the human rights of children in the context of international migration.

54. At the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, held in 2016, Member States adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (General Assembly resolution 71/1), setting in motion processes for the development of two global compacts (on refugees and on safe, orderly and regular migration) for adoption in 2018. A coalition of child protection actors has come together as the Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts to advocate for the compacts to address the rights, needs and risks of children on the move, including aspects related to violence against children.[63] The Coalition on Every Child's Right to a Nationality, led by UNHCR and UNICEF, is working to prevent statelessness among children. A new inter-agency Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action enhances standard-setting in humanitarian contexts.

D. Armed violence in the community

55. The impact of armed violence in the community on children is of increasing concern, as highlighted in the report of the Special Representative, entitled "Protecting children affected by armed violence in the community" (2016). Armed violence is more common in communities where weapons are in wide circulation, which is often associated with the presence of organized crime, gangs and/or other aggravating factors, such as natural disasters, poverty, discrimination and drug and alcohol abuse. Armed violence, including extortion, physical violence, homicides and disappearances, often has a devastating effect on childhood and adolescence. Children from affected communities may face stigmatization and increased risk of

[60] UNICEF, "Uprooted: the growing crisis for refugee and migrant children" (New York, 2016).
[61] See A/71/206, para. 100 and A/HRC/34/45, para. 51.
[62] UNICEF, "Annual results report 2016".
[63] See www.childrenonthemove.org.

detention. Adolescent boys are at increased risk of homicide as a result of street fighting, street crime, gang membership and possession of weapons.[64]

56. States bear primary responsibility for protecting children from armed violence, with regard to which a wide-ranging and integrated prevention approach is required. Such approaches should strive to build a safe environment, secure public safety and promote access to justice and restorative justice approaches. Armed violence prevention and reduction programmes in Latin America align national legal frameworks with international human rights standards to incorporate such principles.[65] States must also protect those who flee their countries to escape armed violence, including through the granting of refugee status under international and regional instruments.[66]

57. An emerging and worrying form of violence against children is the recruitment and use of children by non-State armed groups, some of which are described as terrorist and violent extremist groups. Such groups have abducted, recruited and used thousands of children, subjecting them to violence and in some cases leading them to commit criminal offences, including acts of terrorism, war crimes and crimes against humanity.[67] Member States increasingly face challenges in developing effective prevention and responses while simultaneously providing appropriate accountability mechanisms when children have perpetrated offences. Since 2015, countries from Central and West Africa and the Middle East and North Africa regions have been working with technical assistance from UNODC to address such challenges.[68]

58. The UNODC Global Programme on Violence against Children supports the efforts by Member States to strengthen justice systems. It aims to prevent children's involvement with violent extremist groups, provide effective responses to children in contact with the justice system and promote the social reintegration of alleged child offenders, particularly those deprived of their liberty. UNODC builds the capacity of justice and child protection officials from States facing threats from Boko Haram and other terrorist and violent extremist groups, including in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.[69]

E. Bullying

59. Bullying and cyberbullying are global phenomena affecting millions of children and causing profound harm in their lives. Around 132 million students between the ages of13 and 15 (or 1 in 3 students in that age group) experience bullying regularly.[70] In recognition of the severity of the issue, the Secretary-General issued a report on the topic in 2016 (A/71/213), which is the source of the information presented below.

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[64] See A/70/289, para 55.

[65] UNICEF, "Annual results report 2016"

[66] See UNHCR, "Guidelines on International Protection No. 12: Claims for refugee status related to situations of armed conflict and violence under article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and the regional refugee definitions", (HCR/GIP/16/12).

[67] See A/70/836-S/2016/360, A/69/926-S/2015/409 and A/HRC/30/67.

[68] See E/CN.7/2017/2-E/CN.15/2017/2, para. 60, and Economic and Social Council resolution 2016/18.

[69] See E/CN.7/2017/2-E/CN.15/2017/2, para. 60, E/CN.15/2017/5, para. 56 and E/CN.7/2016/2-E/CN.15/2016/2, para. 63.

[70] UNICEF, "Hidden in Plain Sight: a statistical analysis of violence against children" (New York, 2014).

60. Growing access to information and communications technology has increased children's risk of online abuse and vulnerability to cyberbullying. Children in vulnerable situations are at greater risk of in-person and online bullying, such as children with disabilities, displaced children and children who are perceived as having a sexual orientation or gender identity different from the norm. Adolescent girls are often at risk of cyberbullying associated with sexual abuse.

61. A study led by the Special Representative, entitled "Ending the torment: tackling bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace" (2016), in support of the Secretary-General's report on the same topic, explains that enhanced cooperation and serious investment are needed to end bullying and cyberbullying. Five priority areas for action are: building a culture of zero tolerance, supporting parents and caregivers, empowering children, ensuring whole-school and whole-community approaches and ensuring sustained action by States.

62. Anti-bullying initiatives include awareness-raising campaigns, legislative and policy reform and prevention efforts. The global campaign under the hashtag "#ENDviolence against children" has drawn attention to the prevalence and impact of cyberbullying and prompted action by Governments, civil society and the private sector. In Latin America, the "Basta de Bullying" campaign, sponsored by the Cartoon Network in cooperation with Plan International and World Vision, reaches 60 million households. General comment No. 13 (2011) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, addresses bullying, including through the use of information and communications technology.

63. States have developed national policies to prevent and address bullying. Some have legislated for specific offences, such as student harassment, the disclosure of intimate photographs without consent and malicious impersonation online, in order to address distinct aspects of bullying and cyberbullying. Some States have established remedies enabling victims to initiate civil proceedings or seek protection orders, as well as measures prohibiting communication with a specific person, restricting the use of electronic communication, or confiscating electronic devices used for cyberbullying.

64. Health policies, prevention programmes and restorative approaches are critical in addressing the psychosocial impact of bullying. The WHO global status report on violence prevention (2014) reports a widespread use of life skills and social development programmes to help children manage anger issues, resolve conflicts in a non-violent way and develop social problem-solving skills. Essential restorative approaches include child empowerment initiatives, strengthening life skills, values and participation, the provision of information and support for parents, caregivers and teachers, and whole-school and community programmes.

65. Awareness-raising and social mobilization initiatives, as well as evidence-based programming, are needed to protect children from bullying and cyberbullying. Children also need better access to information regarding the services and opportunities available for participating in empowerment and skill-building programmes that strengthen their confidence to stand up against bullying. Parents, caregivers, teachers and school personnel can play an important anti-bullying role and require support in that regard. Necessary action includes the elaboration of clear and comprehensive legislation on protection from bullying and cyberbullying, as well as further research to compile and disseminate accurate, reliable and disaggregated data.

F. Online violence, abuse and exploitation

66. Information and communications technology brings many opportunities, but also facilitates online violence, exploitation and abuse of children, in addition to cyberbullying. The amount and circulation of child sexual abuse materials on the Internet is growing. In 2015, the International Association of Internet Hotlines reported a 7 per cent increase in the usage thereof since 2014.[71] The study by the Special Representative on information and communications technologies, the Internet and violence against children, reveals that children using the Internet can be exposed to harmful information or inappropriate material. Such children can be groomed by potential predators and subjected to sexual abuse and exploitation, including through the non-consensual distribution of content produced by sexting, the production and distribution of images depicting child sexual abuse and live streaming over the Internet. Risks are amplified in certain low- and middle-income countries, as increased use is not necessarily coupled with corresponding safeguards.

67. Efforts to build a safe, inclusive and empowering digital agenda for children require that online violence and the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children be tackled through a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach. Key strategies include legal reform, specialized care and support services, education and awareness of online safety, and the establishment and strengthening of reporting hotlines and helplines. Key recommendations have been issued by the Special Representative,[72] as well as by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.[73]

68. The Virtual Global Taskforce and the WePROTECT Global Alliance to End Child Sexual Exploitation are Member State-led initiatives that bring together Governments, law enforcement agencies, financial institutions, the corporate sector, civil society and other stakeholders to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation online.[74] The #ENDviolence online campaign builds capacity to tackle online child sexual exploitation, alerts adolescents to online risks and empowers them to protect themselves and their peers. Safer Internet Day is an annual event that encourages global discussions related to children's online safety.[75]

69. The information and communications technology industry supports and develops technology to facilitate the detection and removal of known online child sexual abuse material and the investigation and prosecution of online crimes against children. The industry also invests in collaborative work with child rights and child protection agencies to empower and protect children.[76]

VIII. Way forward

70. Preventing and responding to violence against children is a complex, long-term challenge that requires significant and steady political mobilization and support, as well as sustained financial support. Member States, United Nations

[71] UNICEF, "Annual results report 2016"; and www.inhope.org/gns/home.aspx.

[72] Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, "Releasing children's potential and minimizing risks: ICTs, the Internet and violence against children" (New York, 2014).

[73] See the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child from the 2014 day of general discussion on children's rights and digital media. Available from www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CRC/Discussions/2014/AnnexIII_EN.docx.

[74] See www.make-it-safe.net.

[75] See www.unicef.org/endviolence and www.saferinternetday.org.

[76] See, for example, www.unicef.org/csr/ict.html.

system entities, civil society and others are working to meet this challenge with a dynamic range of initiatives at the national, regional and global levels. The process is increasingly led by Member States and showing concrete results, from legislative and policy reform to improved data collection strategies, and coordinated, multi-stakeholder efforts to tackle areas of growing concern.

71. Much more remains to be done, in particular to achieve broad-scale systemic change. Member States, United Nations system entities (especially the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC and WHO), regional bodies and others must redouble efforts to achieve targets 16.2, 5.2 and 5.3 and other violence-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. Focused and increased commitment is needed to secure resources, scale up effective programmes, increase political engagement and incite the necessary changes in behaviour. This requires Member States, Government and private sector donors, United Nations entities, civil society and other stakeholders to support efforts in the following areas:

Legislative and policy reform

72. **Member States should undertake legal reforms to ban all forms of violence against children; harmonize national legal frameworks with international human rights standards; enforce laws and establish accountability mechanisms that prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children, including those related to family and domestic violence, online abuse and exploitation and community violence.**

73. **United Nations system entities and other qualified agencies, including civil society and other humanitarian stakeholders, should provide advocacy support and policy advice for the delivery of technical assistance and building of capacities.**

Strengthening of programmes and systems

74. **Member States, United Nations system entities and other qualified agencies should promote the collection and monitoring of data, as well as innovative practices to strengthen the collection of data, disaggregated by sex and age, on violence against children, and the analysis and use thereof. Such measures should include sustainable administrative data systems and effective monitoring to track progress and impact.**

75. **Member States, with the assistance of United Nations system entities and other qualified agencies, should strengthen social systems and effective service delivery to create safe non-violent environments for children affected by violence in the education, health and justice sectors, including through the implementation of international standards, such as the INSPIRE strategies and the United Nations Model Strategies on Violence against Children.**

76. **Member States, with the assistance of United Nations system entities and other qualified agencies, should empower children and families, in particular the most vulnerable, by enhancing parenting skills and families' social inclusion and economic stability so as to reduce violence and the exploitation and abuse of children. Such efforts may include increasing children's and families' access to a good quality of health care, education and social protection, including social services and universal access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, information and education.**

77. **Member States, United Nations system entities and other qualified agencies should promote, in an appropriately differentiated manner, girls' and boys' empowerment, participation and enhanced skills in order to build their confidence to stand up against bullying and enable their protection from other forms of violence.**

78. **Private sector actors should adopt policies and operational practices that help protect children from violence, including through online abuse and exploitation, and promote children's well-being, as well as systems to foster transparency in global supply chains.**

Raising awareness and building momentum for changing social norms

79. **Member States, United Nations system entities and other qualified agencies should use interactive approaches and a mix of communication channels to encourage and sustain positive and appropriate individual behaviour, recognizing that individual behaviour is shaped by social, cultural, economic and political contexts. Such approaches involve increasing the capacities of children and families to protect themselves, while eliminating harmful practices and behaviours, as well as enhancing the provision of support in that regard.**

80. **Member States and other relevant actors should build and maintain momentum for changing social norms and practices that condone and/or promote violence against children. In time, changing such norms and practices will better protect girls and boys from violence and harmful practices, through the transformation of underlying beliefs and behaviours that perpetuate violence. Such changes involve implementing and supporting comprehensive programmes to prevent violence against children, including gender-based violence, as well as programmes to educate and build skills among children, parents, caregivers, school personnel and the public.**

Resource mobilization

81. **Member States and private sector donors should invest in scaling up proven, effective interventions and those that show promise in terms of innovation. Such interventions include programmes for improving children's mental health and psychosocial well-being, for strengthening their resilience and capacity to deal with future distress, for tackling bullying and cyberbullying through holistic and cross-sectoral approaches, and for protecting children on the move by upholding their human rights and addressing the root causes of conflict and irregular migration.**

Monitoring the implementation of target 16.2

82. **Member States, United Nations system entities and other qualified agencies should invest in the collection of quality, timely and disaggregated data and the integration of data on violence against children into national statistics systems and strategies, including multiple indicator cluster surveys, Demographic and Health Surveys and specific surveys on violence against children, as well as leverage existing monitoring and reporting mechanisms.**